

FEATURE

Hansen: Charting a Course for Elsevier Health Sciences

If you have a lot of history, people always equate you with it, says Michael Hansen, CEO of Elsevier Health Sciences. Indeed, Elsevier is the world's leading publisher of STM information and products, "but we're so much more than just a publisher," he says.

Elsevier's rich publishing heritage dates from its founding in 1880 as a small Dutch family-owned publishing house with a few titles for scholars. Since then, it has morphed into a global multimedia publisher with more than 20,000 products ranging from education to healthcare. But its roots go back even farther to the original House of Elzevir in 1580. Among its published landmark titles in 1632 were those of Galileo Galilei, who shook the very foundations of contemporary con-

ventional thought. Hansen shares a bit of that unconventional edge too.

Today, the reality of Elsevier's business healthcare, says Hansen. "We're doing a very good job staying close to our users, staying close to our customers, and actually using the transition from print to electronic and the digital age bringing more value to them."

Hansen was appointed CEO of Elsevier Health Sciences in June 2008. "It was a tough time to come on board," he says in retrospect. "But they never tell you that at the time. No one thought the economy would be this bad for this long." Despite the economic ebbs and flows, the attention to the corporate mission stays true.



Michael Hansen, CEO of Elsevier Health Sciences

Staying the Course

"Our mission hasn't changed in the last 100 years, or 400 for that

continued on page 32 >

Challenging Ebook Lending Policies

by MARYDEE OJALA

■ A letter from OverDrive, Inc. CEO and president Steve Potash, dated Feb. 24, 2011, made its way to scores of OverDrive library partners. The letter included a paragraph about changes to one publisher's ebook licensing that would "include a checkout limit for each eBook licensed."

Josh Hadro, writing in *Library Journal* the next day, identified the publisher as News Corp. subsidiary HarperCollins Publishers and the limit as 26 checkouts. After that, the ebook would expire unless libraries paid an additional

continued on page 36 >

MORE INSIDE

24

Intellectual Property



Beth Vanni

6

1

Challenging Ebook Lending Policies



22

StumbleUpon



19

Captain Obvious



In Pursuit of Metaknowledge

by KURT SCHILLER

■ The internet has a way of wringing new value from existing content. Consider iTunes and Netflix, entertainment juggernauts built at least partly on extensive catalogs of old content. Now a similar trend may be coming to the field of scientific research, and a recent paper is shedding light on the ways new findings and data can be extracted from existing published research.

The Knowledge of Knowledge

Sociologist James Evans of the University of Chicago considers himself a sociologist of knowledge; his research delves into the "social and institutional networks of science" that make research, peer review, and the scientific process possible. By examining the way these networks of individuals relate to the scientific process, this sort of

continued on page 34 >

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Check out highlights from NFAIS starting on page 16.

Big Changes for Academic Presses	13
Data Fusion & Discovery	20
Fired Over Facebook	26



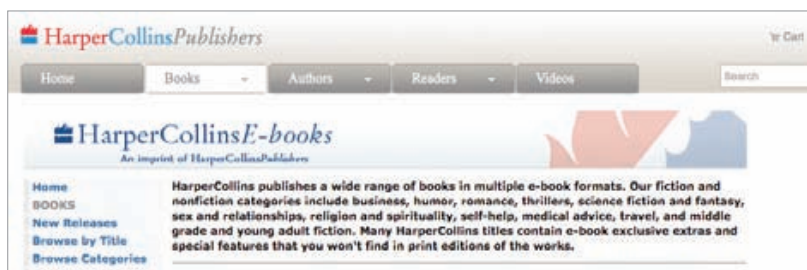
Challenging Ebook Lending Policies

◀ continued from page 1

fee to relicense the title. OverDrive stressed that the policy would not be retroactive and noted that the policy applied to all distributors of HarperCollins' ebooks, not just OverDrive.

Furious at this new policy, librarians responded quickly, both through social media and with letters to executives at OverDrive and HarperCollins. On Twitter, the hashtag #hcod, archived in Twapper Keeper, had more than 4,700 tweets by March 4. Influential library bloggers, such as Sarah Houghton-Jan, Andy Woodworth, Toby Greenwalt, and Eric Hellman, weighed in. On the widely read Boing Boing website, Cory Doctorow, a nonlibrarian, moved the issue out of the library echo chamber, castigating HarperCollins (they "will nuke your ebooks") and urging librarians not to buy DRM ebooks.

On March 1, 2011, HarperCollins responded in an open letter to the library community from Josh Marwell, president of sales. "We are looking to balance the mission and needs of libraries and their patrons with those of authors and book-sellers," he wrote, adding that the ebook market has exploded since the company created the original policy 10 years ago. He also stated that the company had made the decision after consulting with agents, distributors, and librarians.



Applying Print Criteria in the Digital World

In response to *Library Journal's* Hadro, Marwell justified the 26 circulations by making the analogy that print books in library collections wear out and need to be replaced. Librarians found the comparison ludicrous, both in the low number chosen and in equating print and electronic formats. The Pioneer Library System in Oklahoma posted a video on YouTube, which was viewed almost 20,000 times in less than a week. It showed the quality of print titles after numerous circulations. After many more than 26 loans, the books were not in need of replacement or repair.

OverDrive responded to the furor by posting a message on its blog stat-

ing that it would move HarperCollins ebooks from its general catalog to a separate catalog when the new policy kicked in on March 7, 2011.

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Librarians remain upset and angry. One proposal emerged: Boycott HarperCollins. This would be difficult, since HarperCollins is one of the largest publishers in the world and publishes popular authors such as Neil Gaiman, Laura Lippman, Diane Mott Davidson, and Joyce Carol Oates. Avon, publisher of romance novels, is one of its imprints. In nonfiction, it covers the political spectrum from Madeleine Albright to Sarah Palin. Even Scott Adams' *Dilbert* cartoon books are published by HarperCollins. As one public librarian said, "How do we tell one of our library trustees that he can't borrow a popular best seller because it's published by HarperCollins?"

Although librarians are angry, they haven't lost their sense of humor. On Twitter, the hashtag #hcodtitles, also archived on Twapper Keeper, collected proposed ebook titles such as *Fellowship of the DRM*, *The After-26-Readings-Ending Story*, and *Harry Potter and the Limited Use Renewable*.

Ebook Bill of Rights

Houghton-Jan, assistant director at the San Rafael Public Library, proposed an ebook bill of rights:

Every eBook user should have the following rights:

- the right to use eBooks under guidelines that favor access over proprietary limitations
- the right to access eBooks on any technological platform, including the hardware and software the user chooses
- the right to annotate, quote passages, print, and share eBook content within the spirit of fair use and copyright
- the right of the first-sale doctrine extended to digital content, allowing the eBook owner the right to retain, archive, share, and re-sell purchased eBooks

Geographic Restrictions

Overshadowed by the outrage of having to renew an ebook subscription after 26 loans are two other parts of the new policy. HarperCollins also wants geographic restrictions on borrowing ebooks. OverDrive's letter dated Feb. 24 stated the following:

In addition, our publishing partners have expressed concerns regarding the card issuance policies and qualification of patrons who have access to OverDrive supplied digital content. Addressing these concerns will require OverDrive and our library partners to cooperate to honor geographic and territorial rights for digital book lending, as well as to review and audit policies regarding an eBook borrower's relationship to the library (i.e. customer lives, works, attends school in service area, etc.).

Individual libraries buy books, but ebooks are more likely to be purchased by consortia, such as ListenNJ in

Links to the Source

Letter to OverDrive library partners

<http://librarianbyday.net/localwp-content/uploads/2011/02/OverDrive-Library-Partner-Update-from-Steve-Potash-2-24-2011.pdf>

Josh Hadro, *Library Journal*

www.libraryjournal.com/lj/home/889452-264/harpercollins_caps_loans_on_ebook.html.csp

Pioneer Library System's video "Harper Collins 26+ Checkouts" on YouTube

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Je90XRRruM

OverDrive response

<http://overdriveblogs.com/library/2011/03/01/a-message-from-overdrive-on-harpercollins-new-ebook-licensing-terms>

Ebook Bill of Rights

<http://librarianinblack.net/librarianinblack/2011/02/ebookrights.html>



New Jersey or eIndiana Digital Consortium in Indiana. So the 26 circulations would be shared among multiple libraries. If a consortium had 13 libraries, theoretically each library could circulate a HarperCollins ebook only two times before access expired. If one library loaned an ebook three times before another library patron in the consortium wanted to borrow it, then the second library could only lend it once before the consortium would have to pay for continued access.

HarperCollins' new policy also causes librarians to fear that other publishers might follow suit. ...

Consortia span larger geographic areas than a single library district. Apparently, this is antithetical to HarperCollins' business model. However, to apply this policy to existing consortia raises huge questions about the privacy of library cardholders, the policies of libraries about card issuance (places with statewide borrow-

ing privileges, cards that those living outside established library jurisdictions can purchase, and contractual borrowing/lending agreements), and the sustainability of library budgets to purchase ebooks.

Looking at the Past to Predict the Future

Given that News Corp. is HarperCollins' parent company, the new policy should not be surprising. Its past insistence on a paywall for *The Times* of London, which is also being instituted by other newspaper publishers, and its accusations that The British Library is digitizing newspapers for commercial gain indicate an unbending unwillingness to negotiate with library representatives.

HarperCollins' new policy also causes librarians to fear that other publishers might follow suit, which would amplify financial pressures and limit the ability of libraries to adequately meet customer demand for ebooks. Switching from owning physical books to subscribing to ebooks is not easy for libraries. The old argument of ownership versus access has taken a rather nasty turn with these policy developments.

Marydee Ojala, who edits *ONLINE: Exploring Technology & Resources for Information Professionals*, is also program director for Internet Librarian International. Send your comments about this article to itletters@infotoday.com.

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